



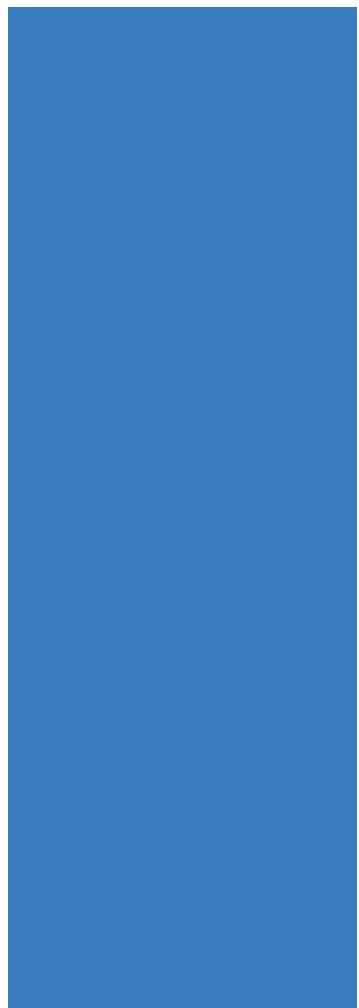
# ***Hope for Success: Returning Home***

**Commission on Equity & Opportunity  
Reentry Working Group  
REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS**



**CEO**  
Commission on Equity and Opportunity

JANUARY 2019





The Commission on Equity and Opportunity (CEO) mission is to focus on the quality of life for members of the African-American, Asian Pacific American and the Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut.

Special Act No. 18-14 calls for the CEO to establish a working group to study housing options for persons reentering the community after incarceration and to recommend an evidence-based housing policy for such persons to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to housing by January 1, 2019.



January 1, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing:

Pursuant to Special Act 18-14, “An Act Creating a Working Group to Study Housing Options for Persons Reentering the Community after Incarceration,” the Commission on Equity and Opportunity (CEO) was directed to: (1) study housing options for persons reentering the community after incarceration, and (2) recommend an evidence-based housing policy for such persons. The Commission hereby presents its report and recommendations as required by the act.

The report's recommendations fall under three broad categories: 1) Housing Access; 2) Programming Capacity, and 3) Systems Alignment. Research shows that if the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) invests in stronger/smarter policies and better housing solutions for the reentry population, the state will very likely realize a return on that investment and improve the quality of life for its residents through increased public safety, reduced recidivism, and reduced healthcare spending.

More specifically, we ask that Housing Committee leadership review our strategies to strengthen anti-discrimination laws in housing – among other suggestions – that will require legislation (i.e., Ban the Box Law for Housing & Clean Slate Legislation) during the 2019 legislative session.

The Commission is a nonpartisan agency with a data driven, cross-cultural approach to policy innovation. We work to eliminate disparities by creating opportunities, building connections and promoting systems and policy change. The Commission stands ready to provide additional information and support in pursuit of effective state policy in this important area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Hernández".

Steven Hernández, Esq.  
Executive Director

## **Working Group Meetings**

### **Wednesday, August 1, 2018**

Legislative Office Building, Room 1E

### **Wednesday, September 5, 2018**

Legislative Office Building, Room 1E

### **Wednesday, October 3, 2018**

Legislative Office Building, Room 2C

### **Wednesday, November 7, 2018**

Legislative Office Building, Room 2C

### **Wednesday, November 5, 2018**

Legislative Office Building, Room 2C

## **Listening Tour Dates**

Tuesday, November 13, 2018

**Willimantic**

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

**New London**

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

**Hartford**

## **Statutory Language**

### **Special Act No. 18-14**

Section 1. (Effective from passage) (a) Not later than July 1, 2018, the Commission on Equity and Opportunity (CEO) shall convene a working group to (1) study housing options for persons reentering the community after incarceration, and (2) recommend an evidence-based housing policy for such persons. The working group shall consist of employees of the Commission on Equity and Opportunity, the Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee, the Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's designee, and community stakeholders. (b) Not later than January 1, 2019, the CEO shall submit a report of the recommendations of the working group as set forth in subsection (a) of this section, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to housing.

## **Working Group Leadership**

### **Evonne Klein**

Commissioner, Department of Housing

### **Steve DiLella** ALTERNATE

Director of the Individual & Family Support Program Unit, State Department of Housing

### **Scott Semple**

Commissioner, Department of Correction

### **Lauren Miller** ALTERNATE

Counselor Supervisor, State Department of Correction

### **Joe Hagan** ALTERNATE

Director, Parole & Community Supervision, Department of Correction

### **Brandon McGee, Jr.**

State Representative

### **Subira Gordon**

Former Executive Director, Commission on Equity and Opportunity

### **Steven Hernández**

Executive Director, Commission on Equity and Opportunity

## **Committee Co-Chairs**

### **Law/Regulation/Policy**

Amy Eppler-Epstein, Isaias T. Diaz, & Andrew Clark

### **Legislation & Advocacy**

Don Robinson, Earl Bloodworth, & Cindy Prizio

### **Program Evaluation**

Sue Gunderman, Beth Hines, & Judy McBride

### **Community Engagement**

Fernando Muñiz, Bruce Bressler, & Rosa J. Correa

## **Working Group Membership/Stakeholders**

Michael Aiello, Court Support Services Division at the Judicial Branch

Ed Andrews

Jamey Bell, JD, Executive Director, Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director, San Juan Center, Inc.

Earl Bloodworth, Program Director, City of New Haven, Warren Kimbro Reentry Project

Bruce Bressler

Kara Capobianco, Coordinated Access Network Manager

Donna Hamzy Carroccia, Advocacy Manager at Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM)

Elisha Chornoboy, Counselor Supervisor, Programs and Treatment, State Department of Correction

Andrew Clark, Director at the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) at Central Connecticut State University

Andréa Comer, CBIA VP Workforce Strategies

*Continued...*

## Working Group Membership/Stakeholders

Rosa J. Correa, Bridgeport

Maria Cuerda, Fair Housing Specialist, CT Fair Housing Center

Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens, MPA, Community Education & Outreach, Connecticut Fair Housing Center

Isaias Diaz, Attorney, Dressler Law Firm

Bob Decosmo, Connecticut Property Owners Alliance

Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner of Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services

Amy Eppler-Epstein, Attorney at New Haven Legal Assistance Association

Patrick Fallon, Director of Community Justice Services, The Connection

Sarah Fox, Director of Advocacy & Community Impact, CT Coalition to End Homelessness

Jessica Gaffney, Director of Treatment Renaissance, Waterbury

Damaris Reyes-Goodman, Portfolio Management Specialist/HCV SME/Reentry Coordinator, U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

Jennifer R. Gottlieb Elazhari, Director of Public Housing at HUD

Susan Gunderman, Interim Director of Re-Entry Services, Office of Mayor Luke A. Bronin and Hartford Re-Entry Council

Mary Ann Haley, Ph.D., Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Marisa Halm, Esq., Director of Team Child Juvenile Justice Project

Stephen Haynes, MSW, Program Director, Working Man's Center – The Open Hearth Association

Beth Hines, Executive Director, Community Partners in Action (CPA)

Isabel Logan, Ed.D., LCSW – Assistant Professor – Eastern Connecticut State University

Sandy LoMonico, Criminal Justice Organizer ACLU-CT

Judy White McBride, Director of Grants and Partnership Investments, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

David McClusky, Legislative Liaison, CT Department of Correction

Zachary McKeown, CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM)

Fernando Muñiz, Chief Executive Officer of Community Solutions, Inc.

Terry Nowakowski, LCSW, ACHE Chief Operating Officer, Partnership for Strong Communities

Jessica Olander, Association Executive, CONN NAHRO

Cindy Prizio, Executive Director, One Standard of Justice

Louis Reed, Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice

Garry Roberge, Executive Director, Court Support Services Division

Donald M. Robinson, Workforce Specialist, Co-Chair, Greater New Haven Reentry Roundtable

Lena Rodriguez, President and CEO, Community Renewal Team, Inc.

Charles J. Rothenberger, Rome Smith & Lutz Government Relations

Annette Sanderson, Executive Director, Hartford Housing Authority

Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director, Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities (CHRO)

Amanda Sayegh, Director of Programs & Resident Services, Westport Housing Authority

Leigh Shields-Church, Coordinated Access Network Manager

John Souza, President, Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners

Kenyatta M. Thompson, Community Organizing Fellow, Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice

Kitty Tyrol, Director of Programs, National Conference for Community & Justice

Holly Wasilewski, Re-Entry & Community Outreach Coordinator, United States Attorney's Office for the State of CT

Lisa H. Perrone, District Aide, Office of U.S. Rep. John B. Larson (1st District)

Matthew D. Reutter, Director of Grants, Office of U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney (2nd District)

State Senator George Logan (Listening Tour Panelist)

State Representative Joe De la Cruz (Listening Tour Panelist)

State Representative Susan Johnson (Listening Tour Panelist)

State Representative Robyn Porter (Working Group Participant)

State Representative Chris Soto (Listening Tour Panelist/Host & Moderator)

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**“Give people a chance to become a human being again, to become whole. Because if we heal, then guess what - we stop this revolving door.”**

Comment during the Listening Tour in Willimantic

## Invited Speakers

**Dannel P. Malloy**, Governor of Connecticut

**Mary Ann Haley, Ph.D.**, Deputy Director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

**Sarah Fox**, Director of Advocacy & Community Impact, CT Coalition to End Homelessness

**Rick J. Porth**, President & CEO, United Way of Connecticut

**Andrew Clark**, Director, Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy

**Sarah Gallagher**, Managing Director, Eastern Region of the Corporation for Supportive Housing

**Elisha Chornoby**, Counselor Supervisor, Programs & Treatment, Department of Correction

**Jeffrey Fargo**, Counselor Supervisor, Offender Re-Entry Services Unit, Department of Correction

**Salmun Kazerounian**, Staff Attorney, Connecticut Fair Housing Center

**Rebecca Pirus**, Sr. Policy Specialist on Criminal Justice, National Conference of State Legislatures

**Ivan Kuzyk**, Director, Connecticut Statistical Analysis Center, Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division, OPM

**Amy Eppler-Epstein**, Attorney, New Haven Legal Assistance Assoc. and Yale Law School Students, part of the Reentry Clinic run by New Haven Legal Assistance by and for Yale Law School: Andrea Siso, Samantha Grayman, Samuel Breidbart, Max Reinhardt and Laura Lynn Liptrap-Sandoval.



**“Housing is arguably the most important piece in the reentry puzzle, providing people returning to their communities with a base from which to launch into all of life...”**

**“Stable housing reduces the risk that people will commit new crimes and cycle back into jail. In fact, the right kind of housing accomplishes the opposite: It sets people up for success.”**

John Jay College of Criminal Justice Prisoner Reentry Institute,  
Housing for the Justice-Involved: The Case for County Action (2017)

## Introduction

The majority of Connecticut citizens across the political spectrum support measures to prevent housing discrimination and to help people reentering from incarceration find housing.<sup>1</sup> Up to 95% of people who have been incarcerated in Connecticut will return to our communities one day. Having a safe and stable place to live is essential for their successful reintegration. Research shows that if a person has stable housing, they are less likely to commit a new crime and end up back behind bars.<sup>2</sup> Housing provides a foundation for achieving other reentry goals such as gainful employment, sobriety, mental and physical health. Having a consistent address makes it easier for individuals to keep appointments, receive case management services, and complete reentry programs. Proper housing can also strengthen connections to pro-social networks and constructive leisure activities, which research shows reduces recidivism risk.<sup>3</sup>

Updating our policies for housing and reentry based on national best practices will benefit everyone in our state. By investing in evidence-based housing solutions, Connecticut can live up to its promise of becoming a Second Chance society and achieve the following results:

- Lower recidivism rates and improved public safety, with compounding fiscal savings to taxpayers over the long-term.
- Fewer preventable deaths, hospitalizations and E.R. visits of returning citizens.
- Reduced number of days spent in jail and in shelters for chronically homeless individuals involved in petty crime.
- Strengthening of family reunification, health & wellness for justice-involved families and their children.
- Renewed hope and opportunity for racial and ethnic communities disproportionately penalized by our criminal justice system.

## Background and Planning for this Report

The Commission on Equity and Opportunity (CEO) mission is to focus on the quality of life for members of the African-American, Asian Pacific American and the Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut. Special Act No. 18-14 calls for the CEO to establish a working group to study housing options for persons reentering the community after incarceration and to recommend an evidence-based housing policy for such persons to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to housing by January 1, 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Connolly, Senior Vice President, Benenson Strategy Group, September 25, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> John Jay College of Criminal Justice Prisoner Reentry Institute. (2017) Housing for the Justice-Involved: The Case for County Action. National Association of Counties: Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [http://johnjaypri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017-Reentry-Report\\_Housing\\_02.13.18-2.pdf](http://johnjaypri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017-Reentry-Report_Housing_02.13.18-2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2016, August 29). Reducing Criminal Justice System Involvement among People Experiencing Homelessness. Retrieved from <http://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/reducing-criminal-justice-system-involvement-among-people-experiencing-homelessness/>

Since the start of this initiative in July of 2018, the CEO engaged over 65 stakeholders to be part of the Reentry and Housing Working Group, including designees of the Connecticut Commissioner of Housing and the Commissioner of Correction, housing and reentry service providers, persons with lived experience, and community advocates. The group convened five times between August and December 2018.<sup>4</sup> National experts on housing policy and reentry from the Council of State Governments and the Corporation of Supportive Housing were also invited to share their knowledge and recommendations with the working group.

Four working group subcommittees were established: 1) Program Innovation and Evaluation, 2) Community Engagement, 3) Law, Regulation and Policy, and 4) Legislation and Advocacy. Each subcommittee met independently to prepare their recommendations for the working group. Connecticut universities were also tapped for their expertise and to promote broader community engagement. New Haven Legal Assistance Association's Re-entry Clinic with Yale Law School provided legal guidance concerning housing policy for people with criminal convictions. Eastern Connecticut State University Social Work Program dedicated their annual 'Social Action Day' in November to the topic of housing and reentry. During this day, they hosted the first in a series of 'listening tours', which were co-organized by the Community Engagement Committee along with State Representative Brandon McGee, Jr. The second hearing took place at Sound Community Services in the City of New London, and was co-hosted by State Representative Chris Soto, Sound Community Services and the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. The third and final listening tour was held at the Hartford Public Library. This final event was co-hosted by State Representative Brandon McGee, Jr., and Community Solutions, Inc.

After five months of planning, each subcommittee produced a brief report with their key findings and recommendations. The CEO then worked with Diamond Research Consulting to produce this summary report. The remainder of this report presents information concerning the scope of the issue, perspectives gathered from community listening sessions across Connecticut, and the policy recommendations put forth by the working group subcommittees. Each committee report and the New Haven Legal Assistance Reentry Clinic recommendations are also available upon request to CEO.



**"They really do need housing for people.  
Because you get out and you're end of sentence,  
you have no where to go  
and you're just going to resort to the same baggage  
and it will be that vicious cycle, you resort back to  
illegal activities just to make ends meet."**

Comment during the Listening Tour in Willimantic

<sup>4</sup> Broadcasts are available on the Connecticut Network at [http://ct-n.com/show\\_info.asp?mbID=26458](http://ct-n.com/show_info.asp?mbID=26458).

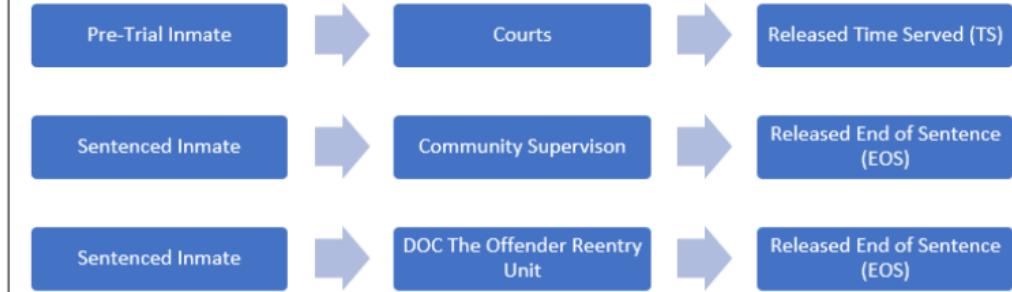
## Scope of the Problem: Homelessness and Housing Instability Among the Reentry Population in Connecticut

As is the case across our country, homelessness and housing instability are serious issues facing the reentry population in Connecticut. The main housing options for people reentering from incarceration are as follows: 1) staying with family, friends or other sponsors, 2) community corrections facilities/transitional housing programs, 3) federally subsidized housing units, 4) supportive housing programs, 5) homeless or emergency shelters, 6) sober homes, and 7) the general private housing market. Each of these options has different requirements and barriers to entry. Connecticut currently does not have a unified system for tracking the housing status of everyone who is newly released from jail or prison, particularly those individuals who are released at the end of sentence. However, Connecticut does have a robust system for tracking homelessness and the number of individuals and families seeking shelter through the Coordinated Access Network System (CAN).

### **Coordinated Access Networks Data (Homelessness Information Management)**

Connecticut currently has seven regional Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) to navigate people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness into emergency shelters or divert them to other housing options. The United Way 211 help line, the 'front door' of the CAN system, receives over 6,000 calls on average per month for housing-related services, with a total of about 93,000 calls in the past year. The Connecticut Point-in-Time Count determined that 3,383 individuals were living in emergency shelters or unsheltered in May of 2018. Of those entering the CAN System last year, at least 525 individuals were recently incarcerated, with the following racial/ethnic breakdown for those who provided this information: white (33.5%), black or African-American (28.8%), and Latino/Hispanic (21%). Almost one-third (30.9%) of the callers chose not to report their race or ethnicity. We also know from prior studies of homelessness in Connecticut that many people who suffer from chronic homelessness also have histories of incarceration.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1. Pathways to Reentry from Jail and Prison in Connecticut**



<sup>5</sup> <http://www.crtct.org/Publications/>

## **DOC Reentry Data & Discharge Planning for Housing**

There are three main pathways people can follow to exit jail or prison (see Figure 1). Those individuals exiting from prison or jail at the end of sentence (EOS) have the highest risk of facing homelessness immediately upon reentry. Between August 2017-July 2018, DOC reported that there were 10,985 individuals released from incarceration to the community. Of these 6,318 were released under a DOC discretionary release mechanism (community supervision) and 4,677 were released at the end of sentence (EOS). Some of these individuals were transported by the DOC to shelters and city centers, while others were discharged directly from the court system.

DOC reentry counselors made 255 calls to 211 for housing needs during this past year. However, DOC counselors were unable to provide discharge planning for those individuals who were released through the Court system. Many of these individuals were incarcerated pre-trial and released from Court without a conviction, or having completed their sentence ('Time Served'). Homeless service providers have reported that some of these individuals arrived from Court without identification, warm clothes and coats during winter, or any linkages to community supports. In general, discharge planning within jails is much harder than prisons due to the short lengths of stay of only a week or two, on average. However, it is no less important, particularly for those with significant behavioral health issues and chronic offending patterns for petty crimes that could be averted by social services.



**Between August 2017-July 2018, there were 10,985 individuals released from Department of Corrections to the community. Of these, 6,318 were released under a DOC discretionary release mechanism (supervision) and 4,677 were released at the end of sentence (EOS).**

## Racial and Ethnic Disparities & Economic Inequality

While our state has made strides in reducing racial and ethnic disparities within the criminal justice system, the hard fact is that African-Americans, Latinos and Puerto Ricans are still disproportionately incarcerated relative to whites in Connecticut. In 2014, blacks in Connecticut were 9.4 times and Hispanics 3.9 times more likely to be incarcerated relative to whites adjusting for population size.<sup>6</sup> As a result of this and ongoing discrimination in housing and employment, people of color in Connecticut experience high rates of homelessness and housing instability. Connecticut's major metropolitan cities, mostly with majority minority populations, are also the first points of reentry for many people exiting Connecticut's correction system.

Even if a person reentering from prison or jail has an address to return to immediately upon release, this living arrangement may be unsafe or only temporary, putting them at increased risk for homelessness and recidivism within a few years of their release. Individuals who are released to community supervision also may become homeless after having completed their sentences. Housing instability is a commonly recognized challenge that reentry providers encounter while working to assist this population. At present Connecticut does not track the percentage of the reentry population who end up homeless in the two to three years post-incarceration (when the risk is highest), which makes it difficult to assess the full scope of this problem.

Especially for those returning residents who grew up in poverty, options for attaining safe and stable housing are likely to be extremely limited. Family members who live in public housing may be prevented from having their loved one live with them due to parole stipulations, or policies of local housing authorities. Individuals who are arrested and detained pre-trial, but not convicted (and who do not have a criminal record) cannot be legally restricted from employment or housing due to their arrest. Federal guidelines



**In 2014, blacks were 9.4 times and  
Hispanics 3.9 times more likely to be incarcerated  
relative to whites in Connecticut.**

Nellis, A. (2016). *The color of justice: Racial and ethnic disparity in state prisons*. Sentencing Project.

<sup>6</sup> Nellis, A. (2016). *The color of justice: Racial and ethnic disparity in state prisons*. Sentencing Project.

suggest that housing authorities use specified lookback periods when considering criminal records, but require outright denial of those with lifetime sex offender registration and those that have manufactured methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing. For others, and for non-federal housing assistance, housing authorities and housing assistance providers have the discretion to determine eligibility. For example, in Greater Hartford a person is ineligible for Section 8 public housing if they or a household member have been convicted of a felony within the past three years for a drug-related or violent crime.

Landlords or property managers who practice ‘blanket’ discrimination that restricts anyone with a criminal conviction from access to housing are violating federal law (Federal Fair Housing Law of Title VIII in the Civil Rights Act of 1964).<sup>7</sup> However, indications are that discrimination is not uncommon. An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment (Public Act 16-83) restricts the timing of a background check by employers until after a conditional job offer is made, so as to help prevent discrimination. However, at present this “Ban the Box” legislation in Connecticut does not apply to housing.

The director of the Connecticut Property Owners Association explained to the CEO working group that while many landlords would like to give individuals second chances, they may be reluctant to sign a lease with someone with a recent history of incarceration because they perceive the risk of having to evict them as too great. When a landlord knows that a person reentering has access to essential supportive services, they are more likely to be willing to take a chance on having them as a tenant.



**Nationally, rates of homelessness among parolees are estimated to be 10 times higher than in the general population.**

**Findings from the Bureau of Justice National Former Prison Survey conducted in January 2008, indicate that 2.3% of individuals on parole were homeless and 5.7% were housing insecure.**

**Rates of housing insecurity are highest among persons who were incarcerated more than once, and persons who were recently released from prison. African-American and female parolees also have the highest rates.**

Couloute, Lucious (2018) Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among Formerly Incarcerated People. Prison Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>

<sup>7</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.

## Listening Tour Findings

During the Commission of Equity and Opportunity Listening Tour, individuals who have been released from incarceration presented personal accounts of how difficult it is for them to reintegrate without having a safe and stable place to live. It is unrealistic to expect a person recently released from incarceration to succeed in a job interview or maintain employment, while living under a bridge, couch surfing, or residing in a temporary shelter.

Any time of major transition in a person's life can be stressful as a person adjusts to their new circumstances. But few transitions are as challenging as reentering society from incarceration. Post-incarceration many individuals need recovery services, mental health treatment, vocational training, legal assistance and other services to help them land back on their feet. Being homeless makes it harder to access these other services as their basic survival needs come first. In addition to adjusting to "life on the outside," people returning from incarceration also must cope with social stigma, feelings of shame and remorse, the complicated emotions that come with family reunification, and the collateral consequences of having a criminal record. This can easily lead to feelings of hopelessness and the conclusion that 'the system' itself is set up for them to fail. Some individuals, especially those with high levels of trauma and few social supports on the outside, are justifiably fearful that they will either end up dead or back in prison.

Under the Obama administration, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued recommendations and clarifications regarding its rules pertaining to housing for individuals and household members with prior histories of arrest and/or conviction.<sup>8</sup> Yet, anecdotal evidence from housing advocates and people with prior convictions suggest that some landlords and local housing authority representatives continue to violate federal laws. Individuals who are improperly denied housing often do not know of their right to appeal these decisions and take legal action. Also, being homeless and vulnerable makes it difficult to follow-through with the action steps required for an appeal. Parole stipulations do not uniformly disqualify people from living in public housing. But anecdotal evidence suggests that some parole officers have experienced barriers to accessing public housing for parolees, and have therefore stopped pursuing this option.

Based on our findings from these listening sessions, it is evident that Connecticut can do a better job of helping people returning from incarceration to access safe, stable and affordable housing.



**Any time of major transition in a person's life can be stressful as a person adjusts to their new circumstances. But few transitions are as challenging as reentering society from incarceration.**

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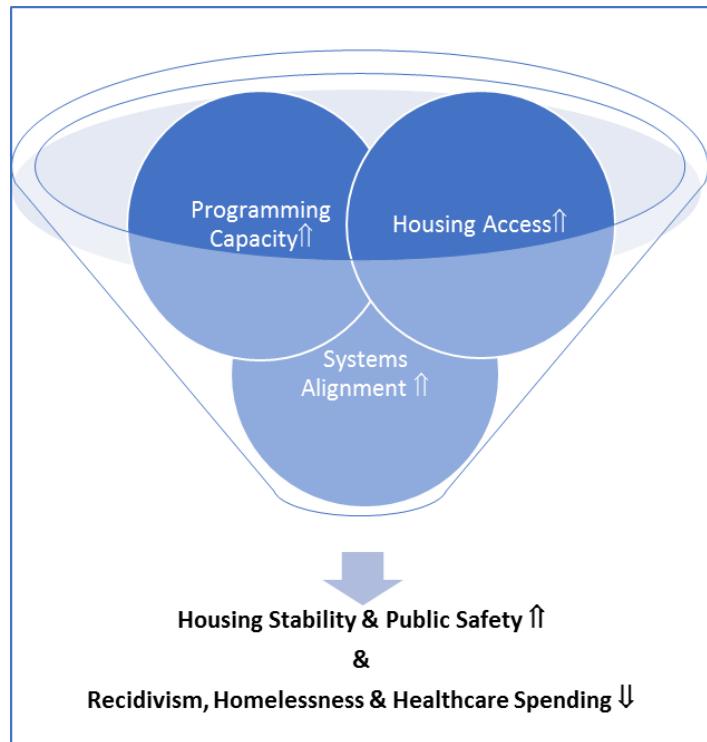
<sup>8</sup> U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Office of General Counsel Guidance on Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records by Providers of Housing and Real Estate-Related Transactions*. Retrieved from: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HUD\\_OGCGUIDAPPFHASTANDCR.PDF](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HUD_OGCGUIDAPPFHASTANDCR.PDF)

## Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

As with most complex issues, there is no single one-size-fits-all policy solution for housing people returning to their communities from incarceration. A series of measures need to be taken by the state, local authorities, and community to address the level of need and the various barriers to housing that different subgroups experience.

The Reentry and Housing Working Group recommendations fall under three broad categories: 1) Housing Access; 2) Programming Capacity, and 3) Systems Alignment.

By investing in stronger policies and better housing solutions for the reentry population, the state will recoup these dollars and improve the quality of life for its residents through increased public safety, reduced recidivism, and reduced healthcare spending—among other results backed by research.



**Figure 2. Housing & Reentry System Changes for Connecticut**



**“Connecticut voters (74% of all parties, 88% of Democrats) agree that there should be laws preventing former prisoners from being discriminated against due to their criminal record when it comes to things like housing, employment, education and insurance.”**

Katie Connolly, Senior Vice President, Benenson Strategy Group, September 25, 2018.

## Housing Access

### ***Goal One: Strengthen Policies to Prevent Discrimination in both Public and Private Housing and Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Housing Access for Individuals with a Criminal Record.***

As the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2015 in *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.*, policies or practices that screen out or exclude people based on their criminal history could violate the Fair Housing Act if such policies or practices result in racial disparities in housing access. A 2016 Connecticut Office of Legislative Research Report titled: *Updated Report: Housing for Adults With Criminal Records*<sup>9</sup> made two policy recommendations: 1) that CT pass legislation prohibiting housing discrimination against individuals with criminal records and 2) expand the role of certificates of employability. Below are the CEO Working Group's specific recommendations to enhance protections against housing discrimination, which expand upon these OLR recommendations. An addendum with the specific amendments recommended for the State Administrative Plans for Section 8 and RAP is available from the CEO upon request. Ultimately, these changes align with DOH's goals of eliminating homelessness, by ensuring that *all* individuals—including people with prior convictions—are able to find safe, stable and affordable housing.

#### ***Strategy One: Policy Changes to Section Eight and/or RAP Administrative Plans, and Public Housing ACOPs, Regarding Eligibility for Housing Assistance***

The Department of Housing operates a statewide Section 8 program, as well as a Rental Assistance Program. We urge DOH to make the following changes to the Administrative Plans for these programs; as well as urging all state and federally-funded Housing Authorities operating in CT to adopt similar changes to their Section 8 and public housing programs:

- Adopt a three-year look back period for criminal convictions categories and only apply them to convictions that have a direct impact on the person's ability to be a proper tenant.
- Remove any automatic denials for criminal history unless required by federal law.
- All applicants with a criminal history within the minimum lookback period should receive notification of a meeting for further review, in which the Housing Authority will invite the applicant to appear in person and present additional information, including personal statements, letters or comments from probation or parole officers, support letters from family members, evidence of employment, education or training programs, evidence of rehabilitation, as well as other forms of documentation that will assist the HA in making a decision.<sup>10</sup> Applicants should be given adequate time to prepare for the meeting.
- Because RAP is not beholden to federal regulations, RAP should re-assess policies regarding criminal history and remove unnecessary barriers, and should especially remove the RAP prohibition against people on the sex offender registry.

<sup>9</sup> Bansal, Juliet Singer. (2016, February) Updated Report: Housing For Adults With Criminal Records. Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/rpt/pdf/2016-R-0023.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> More information is provided in the New Haven Legal Assistance Reentry Clinic memo about their work with New Haven and West Haven Housing Authorities, which is available upon request from CEO.

## **Strategy Two: Remove Barriers to Family Reunification for Families with Housing Assistance**

Reentrants' best chance of success is dependent on secure housing and support from family. Yet, because of overly restrictive housing authority policies, family members with criminal records are often not allowed to be added to their family's lease as a member of the household, thus necessitating the reentrant to find another residence or live without one and jeopardizing their stability. In addition, parole officers often enforce their understanding of housing authority rules and automatically deny requests for parole to housing assistance addresses. Family reunification programs, successfully implemented elsewhere, relax lookback periods and allow reentrants to be added to their family's lease. In order to ensure reentrants are able to reunite with their families in public housing, we recommend the following:

- **DOH should update its policy for families with housing subsidies to permit members returning from prison to reunite with their families.** In such cases, standard look back periods should not apply. Instead, reentrants enrolled in family reunification programs will be added to the lease and be required to demonstrate compliance with parole or probation stipulations.<sup>11</sup>
- Several different **evidence-based 'Housing First' Voucher models** are available to choose from. One is Vera Institute's Family Reentry Pilot Program with the New York City Housing Authority.<sup>12</sup>
- **Parole officers will no longer reject public housing or Section 8 addresses as part of parole plans.** Public housing and Section 8 addresses will be valid locations for parolees, provided reentrants are formally added to the lease.



**The New York City Housing Authority Family Reentry Pilot program is a promising practice. Its goal was to reunify formerly incarcerated people with their families who live in public housing.**

**The participants were referred by reentry service providers. They could be on their family's public housing lease if they completed the requirements outlined in their case-management plans and remained free of justice-system involvement.**

**FRPP helped participants with various reentry needs beyond stable housing and only one of the 29 program participants was convicted of a new offense.**

Vera Institute of Justice. (2016, November). Coming home: An evaluation of the New York City Housing Authority's family reentry pilot program.

<sup>11</sup> As described in the New Haven Legal Assistance Reentry Clinic memo which is available upon request from CEO.

<sup>12</sup> Vera Institute of Justice. (2016, November). Coming home: An evaluation of the New York City housing authority. Retrieved from: <https://www.vera.org/publications/coming-home-nycha-family-reentry-pilot-program>

### **Strategy Three: Strengthen Anti-Discrimination Laws in Housing and Protections for Landlords**

The following recommendations seek to overcome the barriers that those with a criminal record face in the private housing market including discrimination through landlord background checks, lack of preparation for post-release housing during incarceration, and lack of income for security deposits post-release.

- **Ban the Box for Housing**

This law would make it illegal for property owners to look at criminal records beyond seven years. When landlords do consider criminal records, they must also consider mitigating circumstances, such as rehabilitation since time of the crime and consider only crimes related to the applicant's ability to be a proper tenant. Per the recommendations of the Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners, the legislation should provide clear guidelines on assessing tenant risk (including which crimes are relevant) for property owners/managers so as to protect against liability.

- **Clean Slate Legislation**

Consider a state-wide automatic sealing of all or most convictions after 7 years of a person remaining crime free.<sup>13</sup> This would prevent potential landlords, as well as employers, from viewing criminal convictions more than 7 years old, if the person has remained crime free in that period.

- **Certificate of Housability**

This would work like a certificate of employability. Currently, the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the judicial branch's Court Support Services Division issue the certificate to help eligible individuals with criminal records obtain jobs. This would need to have language to makes it enforceable for housing and also address the issue of landlord liability.

- **Security Deposit Guarantee program**

Reinstate the previous DOH's Security Deposit Guarantee program that was defunded, and make sure that reentrants are eligible.

- **Public Education**

DOH enhances its efforts to publicize anti-discrimination laws in housing and any amended PHA guidelines/limitations for people with prior convictions. A *one-page flier* for returning citizens and their family members, and also one for landlords should be widely disseminated and provide information on how to appeal a decision.

**Research in New York State demonstrates that the likelihood that an individual with a criminal record will reoffend diminishes over time, and the rate at which it diminishes is related to the age of the individual at the time of the initial offense.**

**Individuals who were first arrested at age 20 had the same arrest rate as a same-aged individual in the general population 4.4 years after their first arrest.**

**Those who were 18 years old had the same arrest rate 7.7 years later and those at age 16 had the same arrest rate 8.5 years later.**

Blumstein, Alfred and Nakamura, Kiminori (2009) “Redemption ‘ in an Era of Widespread Criminal Background Checks,” National Institute of Justice Journal

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<sup>13</sup> For general background on Clean Slate initiatives, see <https://cleanslatecampaign.org/>

## **Strategy Four: Reduce the Barriers Facing Special Populations Especially for People on the Sex Offender Registry**

In Connecticut, our sex offender registry is not an indication of risk or danger to the community, and does not take risk assessment into account at all. Many people who are convicted of sexual offenses have a low risk of committing a new offense. In fact, people who have committed sexual offenses have the lowest recidivism risk overall compared with individuals who have committed other types of crime with the exception of murder. The Office of Policy and Management, February 2017 Recidivism Report determined that within 5 years of leaving prison 4.1% were rearrested for a new sexual offense, 2.9% were reconvicted of a new sexual offense, and 1.2% were reconvicted of a new violent offense. Out of 11,495 offenders who were released or discharged from prison in 2011, 87 were convicted for a new sexual offense within 5 years of discharge.<sup>14</sup>

- Changes to the Registry for People Convicted of Sexual Offenses**

We should support returning the registry to its original intent: a Law Enforcement tool for monitoring high-risk individuals so that the vast majority of people convicted of sexual offenses who pose no danger can reintegrate into their communities and build productive lives. This would reduce registrable offenses and reduce significantly the number of people on the registry. The Minnesota model (Minn. Stat. § 243.166 Minn. Stat. § 243.167) is one that Connecticut can look to legislate. The Sentencing Commission issued a report in December 2017 that proposed major changes to CT's sex offender registration system, to change it to a risk-based system.<sup>15</sup> Legislation was introduced last year that will be reintroduced in 2019.

- HUD Waiver from Federal Regulations**

DOH should strive to be a leader in challenging exclusions due to sexual offenses. For example, DOH has the power to omit these restrictions altogether in the Rental Assistance Program. The housing authority and/or landlord would still be able to evaluate the underlying criminal conviction that led to the person being placed on the registry, but has no need to separately prohibit people who are on the registry from living in subsidized housing, when many such people pose little or no risk to other tenants.



**Minnesota has 17,600 people on its registry for people convicted of sexual offenses-14,000 in the community. Only 404 are on public notification or their version of a public website – Minn. Stat. § 244.052.**

**The remaining are Law Enforcement Only or need to know (established 2006). Addresses of the 404 people on public notification are NOT listed, only neighborhoods or proximity.**

Community Notification Fact Sheet. (June 2017) Minnesota Department of Corrections.

<sup>14</sup> Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division. General Recidivism and Recidivism for Sexual Offenses. Office of Policy Management. Presented to CJPAC April 2017. Retrieved from: [https://www.ct.gov/opp/lib/opp/cjppd/cjcjpac/20170427\\_recidivism\\_cjpac\\_presentation.pdf](https://www.ct.gov/opp/lib/opp/cjppd/cjcjpac/20170427_recidivism_cjpac_presentation.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://ctsentencingcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05Sex\\_Offender\\_Report\\_December\\_2017.pdf](http://ctsentencingcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05Sex_Offender_Report_December_2017.pdf)

## Programming Capacity

### ***Goal Two: Invest in Evidence-based Housing Interventions that will have the Greatest Impact on Reducing Homelessness, Housing Instability and Recidivism for the Reentry Population.***

Over the past decade, Connecticut has reduced its prison population from its high of 19,893 in 2008 to its present-day historic twenty year low of 12,464 as of September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018, saving the state close to 50 million dollars,<sup>16</sup> without lowering public safety. In fact, our crime rates are the lowest they have been in over 50 years, and Connecticut has experienced the largest reduction in violent crime of any state in the nation over the last four years.<sup>17</sup> Yet during this same period, state agencies as well as nonprofit services in these communities have experienced significant budget cuts, thus hampering their ability to sustain and/or scale their programs to meet the growing level of need of people who are reentering. By reinvesting more of the savings from prison closures back into our communities, we can increase people's odds of successful reintegration and improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for our citizens.

### ***Strategy Five: Conduct a Comprehensive Needs and Resources Assessment to Maximize Efficiencies and Systems Alignment***

We recommend a thorough evaluation of existing housing supports for the reentry population, including those services rendered by state and community providers. These include: rapid rehousing (short-term rental assistance), transitional housing, services provided through municipal reentry centers, access to Public Housing Authority vouchers, and permanent housing. We further recommend an analysis of current service availability and gaps. This assessment will help to identify gaps in services, cost of providing services, likely impact on reoffending, estimated cost of administering programs and projected cost savings from implementing programs, as well as enhancing the data collection protocols for capturing better data on housing needs of the various reentry subpopulations within the DOC Information System, Probation and Parole, and the HIMS system (see also Systems Alignment on page 25).



**Connecticut voters strongly support investing in “Second Chances.”**

**According to a recent telephone poll, 87% support increased funding for programs that help people coming out of prison find jobs, housing and medical care so they have a better chance of becoming productive members of society.**

Katie Connolly, Senior Vice President, Benenson Strategy Group, September 25, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Dixon, Ken (2017, Nov 11) State’s Prison Population Lowest in Two Decades. *CT Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.ctpost.com/local/article/State-s-prison-population-lowest-in-more-than-12348283.php>

<sup>17</sup> Kramer, Jack. Malloy Defends Criminal Justice Reforms With New Stats (Sept 28, 2018) CT News Junkie. Retrieved from: [https://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/20180924\\_malloy\\_defends\\_criminal\\_justice\\_reforms\\_with\\_new\\_stats/](https://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/20180924_malloy_defends_criminal_justice_reforms_with_new_stats/)

## ***Strategy Six: Invest in Evidence-based Housing Interventions to address the Gaps in Services and the Needs of Specific Subpopulations.***

Connecticut has tremendous resources and expertise to tackle the issue of housing for people reentering from prison and is highly prepared to implement and/or scale several evidence-based interventions through cross-sector collaboration. Based off the information from the needs and resource assessment, the legislature can maximize efficiencies and resource sharing in allocating resources to these services. Below are the key housing services that we recommend be expanded and implemented for the reentry population.

- Expand Immediate Shelter and Housing Opportunities for Reentry Populations**

We need to look at the potential for new funding opportunities to ensure that no individual exits from incarceration into homelessness. Implementing an interim housing model for individuals who are end of sentence, with shelter stays no longer than 60-90 days, would help to ensure better outcomes for this population. Through this care model these individuals would be assisted with connections to care in the community, employment, legal assistance and housing case management.

- Rapid Re-Housing Model with Critical Time Intervention Enhancement**

For individuals who have less intensive housing and service needs, rapid re-housing and critical time intervention can be an effective way to help them avoid homelessness. Rapid re-housing provides time-limited rental assistance in combination with housing location and advocacy to allow a person in need to access housing as quickly as possible. Rapid re-housing includes case management services focused on helping the individual to stabilize in housing.<sup>18</sup> In Connecticut, between 2012 and 2016, we have served 5,075 households (8,289 people total) through this intervention, at an average financial assistance cost of less than \$6,000 per household. 92% have remained housed (have not re-entered the homeless system).<sup>19</sup> Rapid-rehousing is recognized as a best practice to end homelessness by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the VA, among other national organizations.<sup>20 21</sup>

- Critical Time Intervention (CTI)**

CTI is a promising practice that is executed by case management and can be combined with rapid re-housing to ensure justice-involved individuals have the necessary supports to maintain their housing.<sup>22</sup> It is typically used when people are exiting a facility and transitioning back into the community. There are three stages to CTI which include assessing need, establishing social supports and transfer of care to encourage independence for the client.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Office of Policy Development and Research. (2018). The Family Options Study. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Retrieved from [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/family\\_options\\_study.html](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/family_options_study.html)

<sup>19</sup> CT CAN Data. (2018). Interactive CAN data on rapid re-housing. Retrieved from <https://ctcandata.org/dashboards/rapid-rehousing/>

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2015). Supportive Services for Veteran Families Annual Report 2015. Retrieved from [https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf/docs/SSVF\\_Annual\\_Report\\_for\\_FY\\_2015.pdf](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf/docs/SSVF_Annual_Report_for_FY_2015.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2018). Rapid re-housing. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Lance R. Hignite, Darlene R. Haff. (2017) Rapid re-housing of formerly homeless jail and prison inmates. *Housing, Care and Support*, 20(4), pp.137-151, <https://doi.org/10.1108/HCS-06-2017-0015>

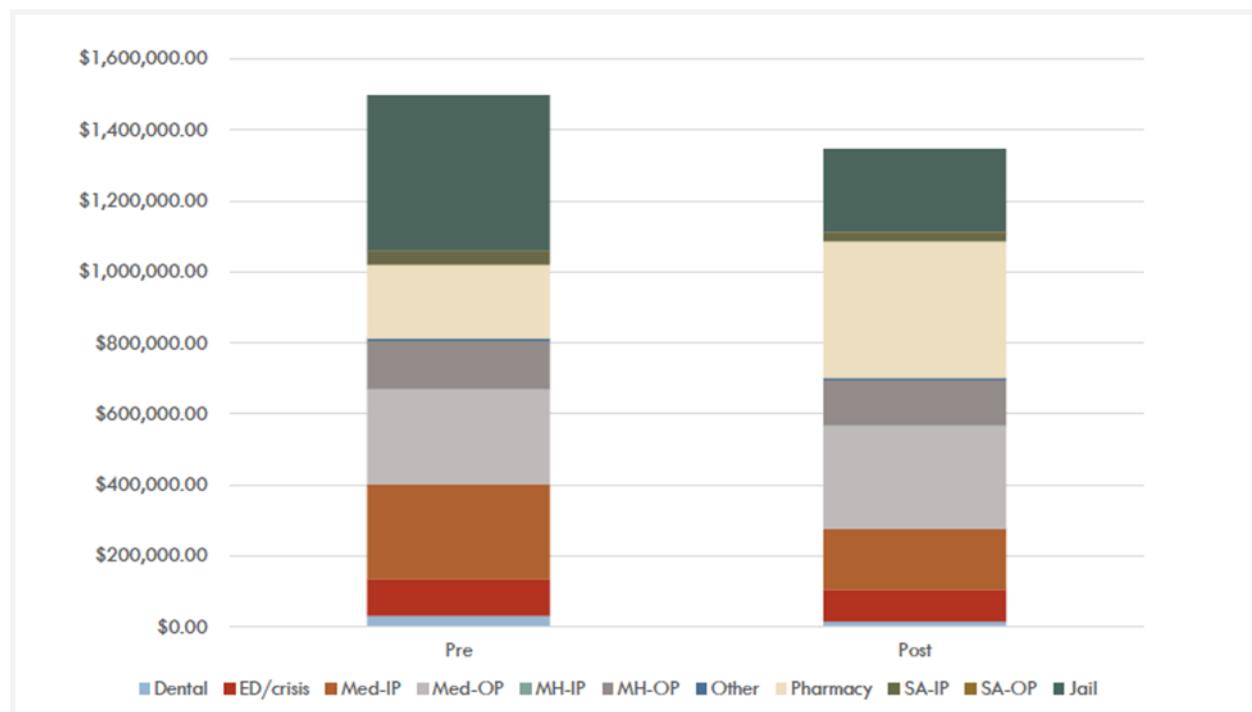
<sup>23</sup> Social Programs that Work. (2017, November 20). Critical Time Intervention - Evidence Based Programs & Policy. Retrieved from <https://evidencebasedprograms.org/programs/critical-time-intervention/>

- **Expand Supportive Housing Model**

For individuals with more intensive service needs serious mental illnesses or have other chronic conditions such as a substance use disorder or medical condition, and who will require longer-term supportive services to remain in housing, permanent supportive housing may be the most effective intervention. Connecticut has implemented the Collaborative on Reentry (CCR) supportive housing model (formerly known as 'FUSE'<sup>24</sup>) focused on individuals with repeated incarceration and homelessness episodes.

This model should be expanded to assist a greater number of individuals leaving prisons that have more severe service needs. Research has demonstrated that this approach reduces the number of days a person spends in jail, and also reduces inpatient hospital stays. In Connecticut, a UConn evaluation of the CT FUSE project showed reductions of 99% in shelter days and 73% in jail episodes as a result of the housing for the cohort of 39 participants housed over a one-year period.<sup>25</sup> The chart below shows the resulting one-year cost savings for 110 participants.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 3. Medicaid and Jail Costs 12 Months Pre and Post Housing for CCR Program in Connecticut**



Note: Figure from Corporation for Supportive Housing. (March 2016) Welcome to Workshop 101: Housing and Reentry. Housing First Partners Conference. Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>24</sup> Corporation for Supportive Housing Fuse Resource Center. <https://www.csh.org/fuse/>

<sup>25</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.pscohousing.org/files/Presentation\\_Resources.pdf](http://www.pscohousing.org/files/Presentation_Resources.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Corporation for Supportive Housing. (March 2016) Welcome to Workshop 101: Housing and Reentry. Housing First Partners Conference. Los Angeles, CA.

- **Medical Respite and Connecting to Community Care Teams (CCTs)**

Individuals reentering into communities with high medical/behavioral health needs often face insurmountable challenges as they seek to find housing. We recommend exploring a respite care model for individuals exiting incarceration into homelessness who need immediate connections to care. These programs provide care to homeless patients who are too sick to be on the streets or in a traditional shelter, but not sick enough to warrant inpatient hospitalization. We further recommend connecting these individuals to the sixteen CCTs that are already established across the state. The intent of the CCTs is to provide a multi-disciplinary case planning approach to help connect these individuals with the services they need to attain and maintain stable housing.<sup>27</sup>



**Of the 11,245 individuals in CT who were released from DOC in 2014, 6,026 (53%) returned to prison within 3 years.**

**Of those who returned, only 32% (1,916) had been readmitted just once during the three-year period. Many (38%) had cycled in and out of prison three times or more.**

**In fact, these individuals accounted for 14,784 separate admits to DOC over this three-year period.**

**Approximately 400 offenders were readmitted ten or more times. Not surprisingly, these offenders exhibited high rates of chronic substance abuse and/or mental health issues.**

CT Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division (February 2018), CT recidivism rates, 2014 cohort. Office of Policy Management.

<sup>27</sup> United Way 2-1-1. (2018, June). Community Care Teams (CCT's) and Related Care Coordination for Connecticut's Vulnerable Populations. Retrieved from <http://uwc.211ct.org/community-care-teams-ccts-and-related-care-coordination-for-connecticuts-vulnerable-populations/>

## Systems Alignment

### ***Goal Three: Improve Coordination & Data Integration between Corrections, Housing, and Reentry to Drive Stronger Results***

Greater coordination is needed across corrections, reentry service providers, state and local government, and community partners to break the cycles of homelessness and incarceration. Many of the same individuals who experience chronic homelessness, cycle in and out of jails, shelters and emergency rooms due to their lack of stable housing. This is a costly way for the state to serve the housing needs of these individuals. Enhancing collaboration in early pre- and post-reentry planning would help ensure more timely and efficient use of available housing options, continuity of care, and integration of other essential services and best-practices. Developing integrated data systems would help document and assess individual risk and protective factors for high cost drivers such as---homelessness, recidivism, and health care utilization---for each returning citizen, and to track outcomes of referrals and follow up.<sup>28</sup> By instituting stronger systems alignment between reentry and housing, individuals can be timely and efficiently directed to the appropriate housing services matched to their level of need and risk, and programs can be held accountable for achieving results.

#### ***Strategy Seven: Implement a Standardized Statewide Corrections Discharge Planning Protocol to Strengthen Coordination, Navigation & Linkages to Services***

- **Use of SAMSHA GAINS Re-Entry Initiative, the Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate (APIC) Model for Post-Release Planning**

This best-practice framework for post-release planning was designed for people living with mental illness or substance abuse issues. The key components include: (1) Assessment of needs and risks; (2) Plans for treatment; (3) Identification of services; and (4) Coordination of the transition plan via linkages to community supports. The goal is to ensure that the released individual is discharged with information specific to their unique needs and circumstances. It requires close collaboration between discharge planners and community partners prior to the creation of individual transition plans.<sup>29</sup>

- **Apply Shelter Diversion Strategies**

Throughout the implementation of the APIC model, we recommend the employment of shelter diversion strategies and connection to housing supports to meet the needs of the individual.

- **Utilize Patient and Housing Navigators**

To assist in the implementation of successful shelter diversion and improve housing outcomes, we recommend that the DOC establish Patient and Housing Navigators, to enhance the discharge planning process and ensure individuals leaving prison are eligible and on the correct entitlements. This promising practice has been implemented in California and plays a key role in helping people to successfully integrate back into communities.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2016, August 29). Reducing Criminal Justice System Involvement among People Experiencing Homelessness. Retrieved from <http://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/reducing-criminal-justice-system-involvement-among-people-experiencing-homelessness/>

<sup>29</sup> System Improvements through Service Collaboratives. (2014). The assess, plan, identify, and coordinate (APIC) model. Evidence Exchange Network for Mental Health and Addictions. Retrieved from [http://eenet.ca/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/APIC-summary-addendum\\_March2014.pdf](http://eenet.ca/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/APIC-summary-addendum_March2014.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> RAND. (2011). Understanding the public health implications of prisoner reentry in California. Retrieved from [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND\\_MG1165.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1165.pdf)

- **Reinstate Department of Correction Job Center initiatives**

Reestablishing the Department of Correction Job Center initiatives for employment programming, outreach, and job readiness, would play a pivotal role in helping to improve the housing outcomes for this population.

- **Educate Parole Officers on Section 8 & Family Reunification Strategy**

Key to the success of family reunification in Connecticut is education of parole officers and reentrants and a logical planning period that would allow a reentrant to be added to their family's lease pre-release or within a specified amount of time (This is tied to Strategy Two). (If possible, arrange for individuals to be added to the lease while still in prison, before transitioning to parole). Education and engaging parole supervision and local housing authorities in this process would be important in opening the vast resources of public housing to be on a family's lease before they are released from community supervision.



**“How do we make sure housing is happening quickly for those who need it most? Connecticut has had a ‘Housing First’ model for 15 years now. We have a single point of entry in our system. We’ve prioritized the most vulnerable....and use the Vulnerability Index Service Administration Assistance Tool to understand the acuity of individuals we are working with...”**

**We should apply similar strategies to tackle the housing needs of people returning from incarceration.”**

Sarah Fox, Policy & Advocacy Director, Coalition to End Homelessness

***Strategy Eight: Improve Tracking and Exchange of Data on Housing Status of individuals who are Released to Community Supervision and EOS.***

- **Improve tracking of housing status and exchange of data for the justice-involved population within Corrections information systems and also the Homeless Point in Time and HIMS Data Systems, and identify opportunities for data integration with DMHAS and other social service data systems.** This effort would require collaboration across agencies that support justice-involved populations, including the Department of Correction, Court Support Services Division, Department of Housing, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the Department of Labor. Some of this work is underway; additional efforts should build on these ongoing efforts by the Department of Social Services and other agencies. Promising practices from the National Human Services Data Consortium could serve as a launching point to help us better understand cross-system data sharing between homeless services and criminal justice.<sup>31</sup>
- **The National Reentry Resource Center has developed and is piloting a housing assessment tool that can be used by corrections agencies to assess housing needs and homelessness.**<sup>32</sup> Adequately assessing needs and increasing coordination between corrections, law enforcement, and community-based reentry providers, closes service gaps, and allows organizations to identify clients who may have elevated housing risks.
- **Shelters/Halfway Houses implement 'Hello' Line for Employment Purposes.**
- **Update policies regarding inmates' ability to access 211 prior to release. People who are incarcerated or in halfway homes are not considered homeless and thus are unable to access CAN shelter services until 48 hours following their discharge.** Although some allowances are made for DOC counsellors to secure beds for individuals prior to their anticipated release date, those who are released early or who discover too late that they have no place to stay, can easily end up homeless upon release. Thus HUD/DOH, DOC, the Courts and Shelter providers need to work together to come up with a better solution to ensure that nobody is released from incarceration to homelessness.

***Strategy Nine: Ongoing use of Data and Analysis to Inform Planning, Tracking, and Resource Allocation***

- **Program Planning and Evaluation.** The data integration recommendation also serves to enhance results-based accountability. State-funded interventions should involve rigorous evaluations, and agencies should be required to report program outcomes, as well as the marginal costs, and to supply this data for cost/benefit analysis using the Results First model. Better data informs decision-making, linking data on housing and other reentry interventions across agencies to assess the quality of services provided to returning citizens. Given fiscal and economic constraints in Connecticut, it is critical to ensure the use of sound data to inform budget decisions to support services demonstrated effective for people returning from incarceration.

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<sup>31</sup> Lehmer, A., Canada, J., Page, B., & Royce, T. (2018). Cross-systems data sharing in practice: Homeless services, healthcare and criminal justice. National Human Services Data Consortium. Retrieved from <https://nhsdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Session-5C-Cross-Systems-Data-Sharing-in-Practice-Homeless-Services-Healthcare-and-Criminal-Justice-4.6.18.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Assessing Housing Needs and Risks: A Screening Questionnaire (2017). Retrieved from: <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/housing-questionnaire.pdf>

## *Working Group*



## *Listening Tour*



(Top Left) August Working Group Meeting at the Legislative Office Building; (Middle Left) Social Action Day Panel members Fernando Muñiz, Theresa Severance, Lisa Cato-Scott, Brandon McGee, Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens, Bruce Bressler and Steven Hernández; (Bottom Left) At Listening Tour session in New London, State Rep. Chris Soto, Fernando Muñiz, and State Rep. Brandon McGee; (Top Right) Listing Tour in New London; (Middle Right) Rep. McGee with Fernando Muñiz; (Bottom Right) Subira Gordon, State Rep. Brandon McGee, and CT Dept. of Housing Commissioner Evonne Klein.

## Conclusion

The CEO Reentry and Housing Working Group engaged in robust planning discussions to lay a strong foundation for cross-sector collaboration moving forward. These recommendations reflect the working members in-depth knowledge of policy strategies that are likely to be the most efficient, cost-effective and impactful in reducing recidivism and homelessness in Connecticut. The table below summarizes the recommendations put forth by the Working Group.

Table 1.

<b>Commission on Equity and Opportunity Reentry &amp; Housing Working Group Goals &amp; Strategies for 2019-2020</b>
<b><u>Goal One:</u> Strengthen policies to Prevent Discrimination in both Public and Private Housing and Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Housing Access for Individuals with a Criminal Record.</b>
<i>Strategy One:</i> Policy Changes to Section 8 and/or RAP Administrative Plans, and Public Housing ACOPs, Regarding Eligibility for Housing Assistance
<i>Strategy Two:</i> Remove Barriers to Family Reunification for Families with Housing Assistance
<i>Strategy Three:</i> Strengthen Anti-Discrimination Laws in Housing and Protections for Landlords
<i>Strategy Four:</i> Reduce the Barriers Facing Special Populations Especially People on the Sex Offender Registry
<b><u>Goal Two:</u> Invest in Evidence-based Housing Interventions that will have the Greatest Impact on Reducing Homelessness, Housing Instability and Recidivism for the Reentry Population.</b>
<i>Strategy Five:</i> Conduct a Comprehensive Needs and Resources Assessment to Maximize Efficiencies and Systems Alignment
<i>Strategy Six:</i> Invest in Evidence-based Housing Interventions to address the Gaps in Services and the Needs of specific subpopulations.
<b><u>Goal Three:</u> Improve Coordination &amp; Data Integration between Corrections, Housing, and Reentry to Drive Stronger Results.</b>
<i>Strategy Seven:</i> Implement a Standardized Statewide Corrections Discharge Planning Protocol to Strengthen Coordination, Navigation & Linkages to Services
<i>Strategy Eight:</i> Improve Tracking and Exchange of Data on Housing Status of individuals who are released to Community Supervision and EOS.
<i>Strategy Nine:</i> Use of Data and Analysis to Inform Planning, Tracking, and Resource Allocation
<b>Results:</b> Reduced recidivism, homelessness, and healthcare spending. Improved public safety, housing stability and quality of life.

When Connecticut has the public will to take on an issue, we can find solutions. Efforts to end chronic veteran homelessness succeeded because of strong leadership in government, and coordinated efforts among nonprofit service providers and advocates. Across the political spectrum, citizens of Connecticut overwhelmingly support policies that promote second chances for people who are reentering back into society from incarceration.

We cannot engage in half-hearted efforts despite our state's fiscal challenges. Instead, we have to take meaningful steps to revise our housing policies and strategically invest in evidence-based programs to match the level of need.

We also have to commit to scaling our efforts over time to achieve collective impact and maximum savings from closing more prisons and improved quality of life and equity for the people of Connecticut. Implementing these policy recommendations will require some upfront investments, however based on available best-practice research one can expect increasing returns over a three to six-year period from reduced expenditures for prisons, shelters, and avoidable hospital admissions.

If we continue to reinvest these dollars back into the communities that have the highest incarceration rates per population and have experienced some of the greatest inequities, we can restore hope and fair opportunities to our families and neighborhoods. This in turn will bring about a new cycle of urban renewal and economic revitalization for our entire state.

Table 2.

Connecticut Voters Poll - September 2018				
% support for changing the criminal justice system in CT by...	All voters*	Dem*	Ind*	Rep*
Increase funding for programs that make our communities safer by helping people coming out of prison to find jobs, housing and medical care so they have a better shot of becoming productive members of society	87%	90%	90%	78%
Allow people convicted of misdemeanors to have their criminal record erased if they go five years without a new conviction after they've been released from prison	85%	85%	90%	76%
Sending first time offenders who have been convicted of a crime into proven programs that address the root causes of crime instead of sending them to prison	76%	90%	75%	57%
Pass a law that prohibits former prisoners from being discriminated against due to their record when it comes to things like housing, employment, education and insurance	74%	88%	73%	56%

*Note: This information is based on a telephone poll of 507 registered voters in Connecticut in September 2018 conducted for the American Civil Liberties Union by the Benenson Strategy Group (Katie Connolly, Senior Vice President, September 25, 2018).*

*\*The margin of error for the data set is 4.3% at the 95% confidence level and it is higher among subgroups.*



**"We have to take meaningful steps to revise our housing policies and strategically invest in evidence-based programs to match the level of need... We can restore hope and fair opportunities to our families and neighborhoods."**

*Hope for Success: Returning Home*



(L to R) -- Werner Oyanadel, CEO Staff; Theodore C. Hsu, CEO Commissioner; Steven Hernandez, CEO Executive Director; Honorable Brandon McGee, Jr., State Representative; Dwayne Moore, CEO Intern; Shanelle Morris, CEO Intern; and Denise Drummond, CEO Staff.

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Yale Law School Students, part of the Reentry Clinic run by New Haven Legal Assistance by and for Yale Law School:  
Andrea Siso, Samantha Grayman, Samuel Breidbart,  
Max Reinhardt and Laura Lynn Liptrap-Sandoval.

### **Appreciation**

Special thanks to State Rep. Brandon McGee, Jr., Subira Gordon, Werner Oyanadel and Sarah Diamond for their input and insight in developing this report.



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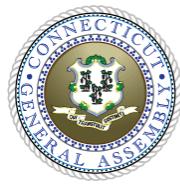
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**"Give people a chance to become a human being again, to become whole. Because if we heal then guess what, we stop this revolving door."**

- Comment during the Listening Tour in Willimantic

**"People seeking a second chance, and in many cases a first chance, after incarceration face significant barriers to securing housing. The link between homelessness and reentry is well established, and a housing strategy is a key factor in reducing recidivism rates."**

- Steven Hernández, Executive Director, CEO



[www.cga.ct.gov/ceo](http://www.cga.ct.gov/ceo)